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Advisory Committee

The Staff of the Day School and Research Program are assisted in its planning by an advisory committee of:

Dr. John A. Anderson,
Department of Pediatrics, University Hospital
Miss Beatrice Bernhagen,
Ramsey County Welfare Board
Miss Valborg Birkeness,
St. Paul Board of Education
Mr. Edwin P. Bradley,
Community Welfare Council of Hennepin County
Mrs. Evelyn Deno,
Institute of Child Welfare, University of Minnesota
Mr. T. C. Engum,
Minnesota Department of Education
Mr. Manford Hall,
Hennepin County Welfare Board
Mr. A. T. Heggerson,
Minneapolis Public Schools
Dr. Sarah F. Holbrook,
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Dr. Reynold Jensen,
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University Hospital
Mrs. Miriam Karlins,
Volunteer Services, State of Minnesota
Mr. Arthur Lewis,
Minneapolis Public Schools
Mr. Frank E. Monson,
Minneapolis Association for Retarded Children
Miss Florence Osborne,
Greater St. Paul Community Chest and Council
Mrs. Letha Patterson,
St. Paul Association for Retarded Children
Dr. Maynard Reynolds,
Psychoeducational Clinic, University of Minnesota
Mr. Edward Schimmele,
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Mr. Wilco B. Schoenbohm,
Minnesota Society for Crippled Children and Adults
Miss Mayme Schow,
Minnesota Department of Education
Dr. Helen Starr,
Minneapolis Public Schools

Miss Mildred Thomson,
Supervisor, Section for Mentally Deficient or Epileptic
Dr. Robert Wirt,
Institute of Child Welfare, University of Minnesota
Dr. V. R. Zarling,
Medical Arts Building, Minneapolis

Board of Directors

The Board of Directors of The Sheltering Arms is composed of thirty women, fifteen from St. Paul and fifteen from Minneapolis. Officers of the board are:

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Dr. Harriet Blodgett says:

"The Sheltering Arms program for mentally retarded children is comprehensive in scope and truly of optimum type. Research and comprehensive evaluation of the total family situation are given primary place and clearly establish the uniqueness of the facility."

Mr. John Gregg says:

"It is a long-range program and future development and expansion will, in a large measure, depend on the ability to finance the same, particularly in the field of behavior deviation."

Needed now are pediatric and psychiatric consultation services of a medical staff. In the near future, more classrooms will be a necessity. Sheltering Arms, with its modest endowment received from bequests and gifts of friends through its 43-year history, has not the resources to expand the present program.

It is hoped that funds from private and national foundations, as well as other charitable organizations, can be interested to help further carry on this most worthy project.

The Sheltering Arms

A Day School
and
Research Program
for
Mentally Retarded Children

4330 West River Road
Minneapolis 6, Minnesota

A Day School and Research Program

The challenge of meeting new community problems as they develop, even though it means a complete change in program direction, is one that faces many agencies. When Sheltering Arms began operation this month as a day school and research center for mentally retarded children from the Twin City area, it gave evidence of its continued desire to provide effective service. For the third time in its history, the 73-year-old institution had changed its emphasis to meet what had now become a more pressing problem.

In 1882, Sheltering Arms was founded as a home for orphans and destitute children. As the need for this type of care diminished, Sheltering Arms turned to a new community problem. In 1942, it became a licensed and accredited 49-bed hospital for the care and treatment of children with poliomyelitis. When the need for this type of facility lessened, the board of directors of Sheltering Arms asked various organizations in Minneapolis and St. Paul for suggestions as to how the institution could best be used in the field of child welfare. The establishment of two training classes for Group II children (severely retarded with I.Q.'s below 50) and one for Group I children (retarded with I.Q.'s between 50 and 80) is based on the recommendations of these many community groups.

Throughout its long history, Sheltering Arms, 4330 West River Road, Minneapolis, has been supported by charitable gifts and endowments. It has been operated without discrimination as to race, creed, or color under the auspices of the Episcopal Church. A survey conducted earlier this year by the Community Welfare Council, Minneapolis, and its committee on mentally retarded under the chairmanship of Dr. Maynard C. Reynolds, pointed up the need for an adequate facility for program, evaluation, and training. The board of directors of this Twin City institution, with Mrs. Harold E. Blodgett, St. Paul, as president, accepted the recommendations of the study committee of the family and child welfare division of the Community Welfare Council. The result was that Sheltering Arms terminated its operation as a poliomyelitis hospital on May 1. It opened its doors to 38 mentally retarded children as a day school and research center on September 7.

Program director for the new center is Dr. Harriet Blodgett, who will also be in charge of the diagnostic clinical services. John W. Gregg continues as business administrator of the institution. Other staff members include three teachers, Lois Swaiman, Grace Warfield, and Fern Knutson; and Josephine Poehler, medical social worker. A volunteer service program, with Mrs. George Prest, St. Paul, as chairman, is being developed.

A four-member technical advisory committee will assist the Sheltering Arms board of directors in program development. They are: Dr. Maynard C. Reynolds, director, psycho-educational clinic, Dr. John Anderson, head of the department of pediatrics, Mrs. Evelyn Deno, Institute of Child Welfare, all of the University of Minnesota; and Dr. Sarah Holbrook, senior psychologist, child study department, Minneapolis Public Schools. An advisory group of approximately 25 persons represents the various community and parent groups primarily concerned with mentally retarded children. Since Sheltering Arms is located in Minneapolis, the teacher center is being conducted in cooperation with the Minneapolis public schools and the Minnesota Department of Education. State aid for the program is through provision of funds available for programs of special education for children whose handicaps are so severe that they require services not available in the regular public school program. Transportation to and from the center is by public school bus. Children from other communities are admitted, with reimbursement by the referring city for its share of instructional costs. The facility will operate as a day center during the school year but future plans may include development of a residential unit and a summer program.

Admission is restricted to children between the ages of six and ten years who are Minnesota residents. There is no fee to parents of children accepted for training at the center, but pupils are admitted only after psychological and physical examinations, with approval of applications by the state supervisor of special classes. Research, comprehensive evaluation of the total family situation, and professional training functions are given primary place in the program.

Program for Mentally Retarded Children

according to Dr. Blodgett, but a core service program for retarded children is the basis of the service. Parent counseling, individually and in groups, is an essential part of the new program.

In the establishment of Group II classes, Sheltering Arms recognizes that there is not enough classroom space available to meet the needs of these children. Since many parents are reluctant to place children in need of such training in institutions, even when space becomes available, a focus of the center will be to attempt to find out whether such children can get a good life experience at home. Some of the questions the staff will attempt to answer are what kinds of children will benefit most and what are some of the factors of success in teaching them. Dr. Blodgett points out that to find the answers will require the active cooperation of the children, their parents, and the various interested community groups.

Program Director

The Sheltering Arms' board of directors did not have to seek far for a program director of the new day center for mentally retarded children. The person they selected was Dr. Harriet Blodgett, Minnesota-trained child psychologist, with a background of school and community experience. Among the first to welcome Dr. Blodgett was Mrs. Harold E. Blodgett, St. Paul, president of the board of directors. Though they share a common surname, they have not found a common ancestral background.



Dr. Blodgett came to Minnesota in 1940 to take graduate work in the Institute of Child Welfare at the University of Minnesota. The young graduate of Tufts College, Medford, Massachusetts picked Minnesota on the advice of Dr. Leonard Carmichael, then president of Tufts and now curator of the Smithsonian Institute. Dr. Carmichael awakened her interest in child psychology and he strongly recommended Minnesota. Dr. Blodgett was born in Lyndonville, Vermont on September 28, 1919, and until she became a teaching assistant at the university she had known only New England. Her work in the past 15 years has taken her into so many parts of Minnesota that she has seen more of the state than most natives and it takes a practiced ear to detect New England in her speech. She traveled more than 20,000 miles last year in connection with a genetic research program carried on by the Rochester State Hospital. She covered even more ground during 1943-46 as psychologist for the Bureau of Psychological Services, Minnesota Department of Welfare.

Most of her work during the past 15 years has been with the Institute of Child Welfare from which she received her master's degree in 1943 and doctorate degree in 1953. Her primary interest has been in the area of children's problems related to physical, mental, or emotional conditions.

Dr. Blodgett has a strong public service drive. When the Minnesota Department of Health began sponsorship of a series of regional mental health institutes for teachers in 1950, she was a member of the team that went into all parts of the state. The 150 screening tests she has given since 1948 in the selection of children eligible for the Cerebral Palsy Nursery School, Minneapolis, have largely filled her Saturday mornings.

Dr. Blodgett is a member of the American Psychological Association, the Minnesota Psychological Association, the American Society on Mental Deficiency, and the American Civil Liberties Union.

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